

Summary and Conclusion

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シリーズタイトル(英)	Development Perspective Series
シリーズ番号	4
journal or publication title	Indian Parliamentary Elections after Independence: Social Changes and Electoral Participation
page range	178-181
year	2003
URL	http://hdl.handle.net/2344/00015319

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In this study, the participatory aspects of voting behaviour have been mainly examined. Voter turnout is the most basic variable of the participatory aspects of voting behaviour. The correlation between turnout and macro socio-economic variables is basically very high compared to that between party preference and macro socio-economic variables. In this sense, the participatory aspect of voting behaviour is more embedded in the society than is the party preference aspect. Turnout increased monotonously until the 1967 election, and then reached a plateau after the 1971 election. Since 1967, turnout has been at around the 60 percent level, with fluctuations of about 5 percent of width.

On the basis of the analysis of continuity of turnout, number of candidates, Congress votes and their relations with macro socio-economic variables, it is shown that the 1970s, and especially the 1977 election, are the most important turning period dividing the five decades of Indian politics. Although the change has been continual, the basic features of voting behaviours have changed.

With regard to turnout, it is shown that the macro socio-economic environment variables are basically very important in explaining turnout. The socio-economic environment model basically has very good explanatory power for turnout. This should not be understood to mean that socio-economic development simply and monotonously raises turnout. It is true that socio-economic development can broaden the channel for the electorate to participate in elections, and thus can lead to higher turnout among the people. Other socio-economic environment variables, however, such as urbanisation, and demographic variables function in a different way on the level of electoral participation. The socio-economic environment variables basically function as facilitating and conditioning factors. In any case, whether people go to vote or not depends first on the level of politicisation of the people. There must be strong political motivation if the capacity of such socio-economic environment channel to be fully realised.

Among the socio-economic development variables, Literacy is the most important though its explanatory power has decreased along with socio-

economic development. It is anticipated that Literacy is ultimately going to lose its importance in facilitating turnout when it reaches a saturation point. Economic development variables are also important, but their explanatory powers are relatively lower than Literacy. It is interesting to note that the Female-Male Literacy Equality factor is increasing in importance simultaneously with the decreasing importance of Literacy. Female-Male Literacy Equality factor is, in a sense, closely related to the basic structural features of society, especially in traditional society. Consequently, this variable is more important in less developed areas in explaining electoral participation. But this variable also seems to be losing its explanatory power along with overall socio-economic development.

Urbanisation is the most interesting development related variable in relation to turnout. The effect of urbanisation has two aspects: a socio-economic mobilisation effect and community relationship loosening effect. It appears that the former effect is conspicuous in the early stage of political participation, but loses importance when rural areas also become incorporated in the overall political mainstream. After the 1990s, thus, the negative effect of urbanisation on turnout becomes very clear. After the 1990s, urban areas show lower electoral participation.

Looking at other factors, we examined the effect of strong political motivational impacts. Although the aggregate level data of this study prevents the accurate identification of a quantitative effect, it is confirmed that the emotionally strong and widespread political impacts steadily bring the electorate to the electoral arena and raise turnout through the socio-economic environment channel. In this case, the channel is fully utilised and, therefore, the facilitating and conditioning effects of the socio-economic environment become also clear.

The participatory electoral scenery in India cannot, of course, be described meaningfully by this limited number of variables. In order to make up for this limitation, an inductive method is utilised to discover other important explanatory variables through stepwise regression.

From the stepwise regression, it is confirmed that turnout is closely linked with the socio-economic and demographic structures and particular political structure of each State. The socio-economic environment channel hypothesis is again confirmed, and, the decreasing conditionality of the socio-economic variables against electoral participation is also verified. Essentially the same thing can be said for some demographic variables. The most important involves STs. STs had a lower participatory tendency until the 1990s. However, they were gradually incorporated into the mainstream of Indian politics at the end of the 1990s. There is a demographic variable,

though, which does not show a stable and clear tendency: the variable of Non-Hindu population. In the stepwise regression, it is sporadically selected, responding most probably to the communal situation between majority Hindu and religious minorities.

The party competition mobilisation model is basically a weak hypothesis in most of the elections. However, it can have some meaning in the limited setting of electoral participation.

Analysis of the State dummy variables and the standard deviation explained by the State factor shows the importance of the particularity of the State. It also demonstrates clearly different regional patterns. States in the Hindu belt are clearly less participatory than the southern States. The States in the eastern part also have distinctive patterns. Similar patterns of electoral participation are generally observed within regions, and distinctive differences between regions. This statistical evidence is considered to demonstrate the importance of geographically-based culture and social structure in electoral participation in India. Turnout is deeply embedded in the society.

In comparison to turnout, the number of candidates is less embedded in the society. It is, in a sense, an interface variable between the party system and society, meaning that it can be influenced by both the party system and society.

In the stepwise regression analysis, it is found that the oligopolistic character of the party system, along with economic development as well as a higher ratio of STs, are factors that reduce the number of candidates. On the other hand, divergent features of the party system and urbanisation tend to increase the number of candidates. It is also confirmed that the number of candidates is very sensitive to institutional changes of electoral system. The result of the stepwise regression also shows clear regional differences. The contrast between the Hindu belt States on the one hand and southern and eastern States on the other is evident. The States in the Hindu belt, which are generally economically and socially backward with some exceptions, produce more candidates than other States. This is an opposite phenomenon from the case of the voter turnout.

The Hindi-belt States tend to have more candidates and less people's participation. This seemingly "strange combination" of electoral factors seems to be the basic reason for the volatility of party politics in these States.

Finally, I would like to consider the significance of the socio-economic development related variables, excluding urbanisation, in electoral politics, because they can change relatively easily in the short term, of perhaps one or two decades, and, hence can play an very important role in the transformation

of electoral politics in the short term. Compared to socio-economic development variables, the demographic variables or the peculiarity of States are difficult to change in the short term, and, therefore are considered as given.

From our statistical analysis of turnout and number of candidates, we can conclude that socio-economic development tends to prepare a more participatory and free political environment. More participatory, because the socio-economic environment channel has broadened. More free, because the conditioning effect of socio-economic environment has weakened. Socio-economic development, on the one hand, prepares a less fragmented party system.

Socio-economic development, therefore, has played an important role in preparing a stable party system in India, and thus is an essential element of Dahl's "polyarchy" concept of democracy.¹ Of course, socio-economic development only explains a limited portion of electoral behaviours, but the cumulative effect cannot, without doubt, be ignored.

Notes

- ¹ Dahl, Robert A. 1971. *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. New Haven: Yale University Press.